SUPPORTING SERVICES

In research the horizon recedes as we advance…
And research is always incomplete.

Mark Pattison, 1875

Reviewing Local
TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD PEOPLE JOKE ABOUT HOW "HELPFUL" THE GOVERNMENT IS? HARD TO IMAGINE FOR THOSE GOVERNMENT WORKERS WHO INVEST THEMSELVES WITH SUCH DEDICATION,

but occasionally citizens have voiced the perception that governmental regulatory processes are cumbersome, inconsistent, and confusing. Occasionally, DNR employees are faced with situations providing evidence supporting this perception. Here is a situation where Science Services staff members are trying to work with the Department of Transportation (DOT) and local governments to figure out a better process for all involved. Dave Siebert, Science Services' Wetland Ecologist and the DNR's liaison to the DOT, is working on a project to improve the efficiency of the environmental review process for local government transportation projects.

For example, if a town wants to rebuild a bridge there are many factors that determine which department staff members need to be involved and what environmental protection regulations apply. Initially, Science Services' environmental analysis staff would need to be involved. However, if a wetland is present at the bridge site, Fisheries Management and Habitat Protection staff may have to review the project. If it were a large-scale project, an approval from storm water staff in Watershed Management would be needed. All in all, the permitting or approval process for the whole project could involve staff from Science Services, Fisheries Management and Habitat Protection, Watershed Management, Wildlife Management, and even Endangered Resources.

The DNR does have a formal process for DOT projects and sometimes local transportation projects fall under this process. But, local projects that do not have funding from DOT have to go through a separate and sometimes confusing process. This many-sided review process can spell chaos for those caught between different regulations when projects are funded from different sources. As one county Highway Commissioner said when asked about the process, "I comply with most of the environmental regulations that I know about." This attitude clearly points toward a need for clarification, consolidation, and simplification.

Through local transportation projects, Dave Siebert is working with DNR staff in regional offices across the state to set policy that will make their jobs easier. He is working with the Local Roads and Streets Council and other stakeholders to understand their issues and problems and to work towards solutions. Furthermore, Dave is working with DOT to figure out what services they can provide to local governments beyond simply funding projects.

Providing services to the bureaus of:

Watershed Management

Endangered Resources

Fisheries Management and Habitat Protection

Forest Protection

Forest Management

Land use issues...

DNR Secretaries have labeled land use issues "the most important long-term environmental issues facing Wisconsin." Science Services works to address these issues. Land use planning and policy staff in the bureau provide leadership for the department's multi-disciplinary Land Use Team, support for the agency's participation on the Wisconsin Land Council, and technical assistance to department staff involved in community planning. Our planners routinely conduct research, respond to land use-related legislative and policy initiatives, assist communities in understanding state laws, liaison with professional planning organizations, and work with other agencies to ensure natural resources are considered in their planning efforts. The Land Use Team, with Science Services leadership and support, has trained staff in the use of natural resources data for planning, hosted monthly brown bag discussion forums, co-sponsored workshops in land use dispute resolution, and organized sessions on computer-based decision support tools. Other recent efforts include publication of a *Planning for Natural Resources* guidebook, development of internal and external land use and planning web sites, and work with department programs to consider the effects of land use decisions in their regulatory and grant decision making. In several DNR regions, Science Services' regional Environmental Analysis and Liaison staff lead regional land use teams and coordinate staff involvement in local land use efforts. Land use staff also helped develop and continue to participate in Wisconsin's Community Open Space Partnership, a broad based coalition of more than 40 organizations working to develop a statewide agenda for open space in urban and urbanizing areas.

transportation projects

The DNR and DOT are wading through perceptions to find a factual assessment of what the problems are and what will work to streamline the process. The result of this work will be a new process that is clearly outlined in a document to guide DNR, DOT, and local municipalities on the environmental review process. Improved efficiency of this process for local transportation projects will ultimately save time and money. It will reduce frustration for department staff responsible for the regulations and the customers who have to navigate through the process. The new process will also allow more focus on the resources and the project.

With a revised regulatory process that actually makes sense to the people who need it the most, people can finally understand what they have to do in order to build highways, bridges, culverts, bike trails, etc., and still protect the natural resources of Wisconsin. ●

One for All, All for One:
INTEGRATING INFORMATION

THE GOAL OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SITE REGISTER (ESR) IS TO INTEGRATE INFORMATION FROM DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS INTO ONE EASILY ACCESSIBLE DATABASE.

"The ESR is a database that contains core information about facilities, organizations, and people regulated by the DNR," explained Mike Kvitrud, Science Services' Analyst and Designer for the project. This statewide project grew out of a cross-reference system that Science Services staff member Tom Aten worked on in the 1980s. In 1999, the previous program was enhanced using federal funding and the information infrastructure was streamlined. The system is currently up and running, and Science Services is always adding more to this on-going effort. The possibilities of what can be done with this information are always growing and changing.

The previous facility identification program referenced a unique identification number for each company. Different programs could then use this unique number for data on the same facility. Unfortunately, the user interface was clumsy and it was hard to access the information. One could only search by name or number and many companies ended up with multiple identification numbers. So, in 1999 the current system was put into place. Each company still has its own unique identification number but they are not needed for integration purposes. Most people use the identification numbers for paper filing and convenience. The new system allows the ability for all information related to one company to be linked together and it is actually possible to access information from different programs *without* the identification number. That means air quality, waste water discharge permits, DNR regulated licenses and certifications, toxic release inventory information, compliance information – everything we know about one company is linked together for "one-stop" data shopping! Currently, information in the ESR is available to all DNR staff on the intranet FACT system.

"The idea of having the big integrated picture instead of a narrow, programmatic view is the most important thing," according to Mike, "Imagine using ALL the information available to make a decision, Smart Growth for example! The potential is not even seen yet! It's a huge, powerful tool!"

Mike works closely with different programs to help each become more efficient and to help integrate their information within the DNR. He works with program staff to help fix data problems and invents new ways of doing business (such as the consolidated billing system). Mike manages information and consolidates data from different databases for inclusion in the ESR. Currently, Duke Kolliegbo is performing a data

Providing services to
the bureaus of:

Air Management

Remediation and
Redevelopment

Waste Management

Watershed Management

Cooperative Environmental
Assistance

Communication and
Education

No double billing here!

The Consolidated Billing Program collects revenue for the entire DNR in an efficient and customer-friendly manner. Initiated in 1973, as a joint Air and Wastewater fee system, the program now includes 18 fee programs. The program serves environmental programs within the DNR and regulated companies outside the DNR that we bill.

The Consolidated Billing program evolved when Watershed Management staff needed to bill companies for discharges and Air Management staff needed to bill the same companies for air emissions, and the DNR promptly sent the companies two bills. As other sorts of fees that were collected from companies increased, it made logical sense to consolidate the bills. The Consolidated Billing Program now claims responsibility for the collection of a multitude of statute required fees, plus various license and permit fees.

During 2001, over $25 million came through the consolidated billing system. In 2002, Landfill License surcharge and Recycling Tipping Fees were collected for the first time causing the dollar amount to exceed $40 million!
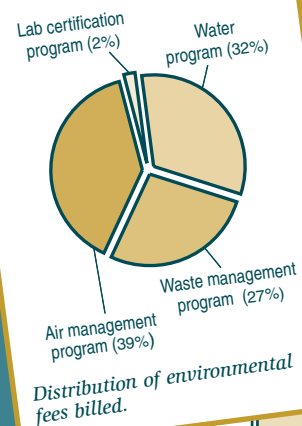
The program follows an annual collection cycle. In early spring, environmental programs collect the billing information for the year. By April, numbers are "crunched" and in May, Mike Kvitrud uploads the billing files prepared by the program bureaus into the Environmental Site Register (ESR) which maintains all of the environmental fee information. The Consolidated Billing Program calculates the bills, sends them out, collects the payments, and distributes the revenue to the correct funds.

How is the Consolidated Billing Program working? The companies usually pay their bills on time, with few complaints. It is very convenient for them to receive only one bill from the agency.

The time that is saved for the DNR's environmental programs is a significant factor in evaluating the success of the Consolidated Billing Program. After all, it is important to remember that the primary goals of the environmental programs are to protect the environment, not to collect money. By providing the billing service for the regulatory programs, Science Services allows them to concentrate on protecting our natural resources without spending valuable staff time on bill collecting.

Fees include:
- hazardous waste annual generator fees
- air emission fees
- wastewater fees
- storm water fees
- wastewater groundwater fees
- laboratory certification registration fees
- solid waste facility license fees
- hazardous waste license fees
- construction and demolition landfill inspection fees
- solid waste transportation license fees
- solid waste landfill environmental fees
- hazardous waste manifest fees

Lab certification program (2%)
Water program (32%)
Waste management program (27%)
Air management program (39%)

Distribution of environmental fees billed.

one for all, all for one

accuracy review of the site register to make sure everything is accurate in the database.

Wisconsin is way ahead of other states in developing data integration systems. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded Science Services a grant to establish a "node" on their Environmental Network. For example, with this "Wisconsin node" EPA staff can request information about a specific company, factory, or garage, and access the data they want related to air, water, and waste in Wisconsin.

The efficient working of the ESR stands to have an impact on decisions related to permits, enforcement, and land use. For instance, information on spills and old landfills might have an impact on zoning or

permitting. Anyone will be able to check to see if there is any information on a property (such as spills or old landfills) that one may want to purchase or develop. Additionally, various environmental groups may be interested in data related to chemical emissions, spills, toxic releases, etc.

The site register has already made life easier for DNR staff in environmental programs, finance, and management and budget. We are currently integrating various programs' license, permit, discharge, emission, and other environmental fees in the ESR and sending companies one consolidated bill (see sidebar). Consolidated billing would not be possible without the site register. ●

Revising the Laboratory
CERTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION CODE

ALMOST EVERY BUREAU IN THE DNR USES LABORATORY DATA TO MAKE IMPORTANT DECISIONS – FROM DETERMINING WHETHER A LANDFILL IS LEAKING CONTAMINANTS TO WHETHER OUR WATER IS SAFE TO DRINK.

Providing services to
the bureaus of:

Drinking Water and
Groundwater

Watershed Management

Remediation and
Redevelopment

Waste Management

Cooperative Environmental
Assistance

Decision-makers in the DNR rely on certification and registration to measure the competence of the analytical laboratories submitting data. Although the Laboratory Certification and Registration Code (NR 149, Wis. Admin. Code) has been revised several times since its creation in 1986, it has never undergone a major overhaul. The unsuccessful attempt to adopt a set of national standards for accreditation of laboratories served as the catalyst for a revision and modernization of Wisconsin's code.

Since 1986, the environmental laboratory community has experienced many changes in the way it conducts business and in the expectation of its data users. During the last decade the commercial laboratory sector saw sharp rises in contracts and requests for services (e.g., "Super-fund" cleanups, underground storage tank removal, etc.) followed by precipitous declines as government subsidies for these activities dried up. As a result, in-house laboratories have had to contend with meeting lower and lower limits for discharging potential contaminants into the environment. Data users are increasingly more concerned with receiving data that can withstand any legal challenge. All laboratories and users, whether they like it or not, find themselves reacting to a new world order of national and international standards organizations. It finally appears that it is time for a revision of NR 149.

The laboratory certification and registration code revision project is cochaired by Science Services' audit chemists Diane Drinkman and Alfredo Sotomayor. They are also the leaders of the NR 149 Revision Advisory Committee (RAC). The RAC includes all members of the Certification Standards Review Council (a group authorized by statute to advise the DNR on laboratory certification) and representatives from trade organizations (e.g., Wisconsin Environmental Laboratories Association, the Wisconsin Paper Council, and the Municipal Environmental Group.

Diane and Alfredo convene the RAC every six weeks. They collect ideas from program staff, take them to the committee, and bring the committee's advice back to staff. Through meeting with constituents, DNR programs receiving data, and laboratory inspectors, Alfredo and Diane have identified key areas of the certification and registration code that need change. National trends are watched to help keep Wisconsin within the range of what other states are doing, since the program also certifies
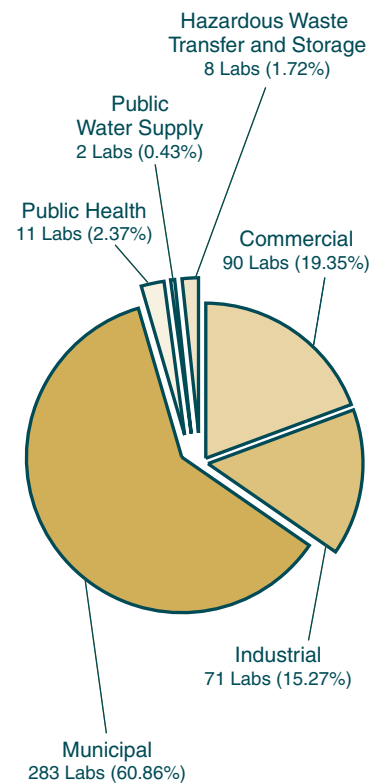
revising the code
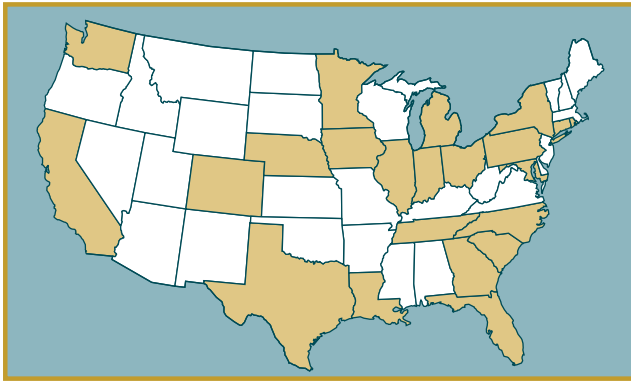
The Wisconsin DNR Laboratory Certification Program supports labs in 22 states. Approximately 15% (or 69) of the labs are located in states other than Wisconsin (shaded states shown in map).

laboratories in other states. The revision project will culminate with presentation of a rule revision package to the Natural Resources Board in late 2003 or early 2004.

Several goals have been set for this revision project. First and foremost, necessary changes will increase the quality and the ability to defend the data produced by laboratories in the program. This in turn will boost the quality of DNR decisions made from those data. At the conclusion of the project, laboratories will have more clarity on how to optimize their operations to meet the needs of the DNR. The revised code will allow laboratories the flexibility to choose options that will better meet their needs and offer more tailored solutions instead of "one-size fits all" choices. In the end, Diane and Alfredo see this project as an opportunity to improve our administrative processes and to make them more useful to the laboratories and the DNR programs they serve.

Our constituents care about the quality of the data they are producing, but may have different ideas about how to achieve the level of quality that we need. The DNR is regulating an industry that is *not* in a growth phase. It is almost impossible to separate discussions of quality from those of cost. Diane considers the project a good example of our philosophy of continuous quality improvement. We are taking a program of proven stature and continuing to improve it by making sure it keeps pace with the times.

"The level of participation we have fostered is remarkable," Alfredo commented. This project may be teaching us as much valuable information about working together as about laboratory regulations. "Consensus building takes time and creativity. People don't embrace change unless they understand a reason for change," he added. ●

Hazardous Waste Transfer and Storage
8 Labs (1.72%)

Public Water Supply
2 Labs (0.43%)

Public Health
11 Labs (2.37%)

Commercial
90 Labs (19.35%)

Industrial
71 Labs (15.27%)

Municipal
283 Labs (60.86%)

Type of laboratory supported.

Customer Satisfaction: A Measure
OF SUCCESS FOR LICENSE SALES

IN SERVICES INDUSTRIES AND PROFESSIONS, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IS THE MEASURE OF SUCCESS. SCIENCE SERVICES SOCIOLOGIST ED NELSON AND HIS ASSISTANT KATHRYN PEREIRA KNOW THIS BETTER

than any one else. Through customer service and licensing surveys, they evaluated customer satisfaction at different types of sales outlets. Improving the way hunting and fishing licenses are sold will affect everyone who buys a license and the license vendors.

It is easy to take automated license sales for granted, but in 1994 customer feedback was needed when the DNR moved from manual to online licensing. At that time Ed conducted a series of focused discussions around the state. The current project has revisited some of the issues raised at that time in order to see how the system is currently working for the public after the switch to the automated system. It examines how the system is working for both the vendors and the customers. The vendors reviewed the new system plans and gave tangible feedback on their experience with the new system. It is important for the people who use the automated system that it works well.

In February 2002, Ed and Kathryn mailed surveys to 1000 customers that fell into three categories: customers who purchased hunting licenses from DNR outlets, those that purchased licenses from private vendors (e.g., K-Mart, Mills Fleet Farm, Gander Mountain, etc.), and those that bought licenses using the Internet. Eight hundred recipients bought their licenses using a traditional method (DNR Service Center or a retail store), while two hundred purchased their licenses through telephone or Internet sales. Six hundred forty recipients returned the surveys and after all the responses were compiled, a comparative analysis was done to determine if there were any differences in satisfaction between customers using the different sales outlets.

The researchers found that customer satisfaction is generally high; people like the automated system. The level of customer satisfaction is comparable between DNR and private outlets. Customers using DNR outlets expressed slightly more satisfaction, indicating government staff are doing as good as, or better than, private vendors. People generally tend to purchase their licenses at an outlet because it is convenient and close to home. Retail customers like the convenience of buying other products for hunting and fishing when they purchase a license, whereas customers using DNR Service Centers like the availability of reliable information on hunting and fishing regulations. They found that DNR employees are more knowledgeable than retail staff at private outlets, but private vendors offer more convenient hours.

Providing services to the bureaus of:

Customer Service and Licensing

Law Enforcement

Communication and Education
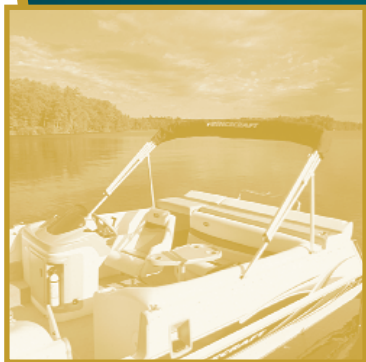
Estimating gas consumption...

An excise tax on gasoline used in recreational engines (e.g., motor boats, snow mobiles, all-terrain vehicles, etc.) supports DNR management and regulation of the sports generating the tax. Excise tax levels are based on estimates of gasoline consumption for a given type of activity. Under the direction of our social scientists, existing estimates of gasoline consumption for the various sports were recently updated.

Over a 2-year period, researchers used mailed questionnaires to survey boaters, ATV riders, and snowmobilers on a monthly or biweekly basis during logical activity periods. We surveyed nearly 22,000 recreationists, with a response rate of approximately 70%. Researchers then generated estimates of gasoline consumption along with other information related to a given sport (e.g., days of use, issues and concerns about the sport, contact with law enforcement officials and assessment of that contact, etc.). The estimates and related information is used in legislative budget deliberations and the planning and evaluation of enforcement activities.

customer satisfaction

The information from this project describes what is going on better than saying what needs to change. This information may affect reconfiguration of the licensing system in the future, but right now it provides managers a picture of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction regarding license sales. As a result, parts of the old system that did not work have been expunged, and staff running the automated machines with people buying the licenses, have had a better experience. Mainly in part because of the improvements made and the fact that the DNR paid attention to what the customers want. As for Ed, he just "enjoyed working with the vendors and of course, it's always a privilege to work with the public." ●

The 2001 study showed that the level of customer satisfaction is comparable between retail outlets and DNR service centers. However, customers that used DNR service centers expressed higher satisfaction. This indicates that state workers are doing as good a job as, or better than, retail staff.

Chart: Percent (%) Satisfaction — Retail 83%, Service Center 87%
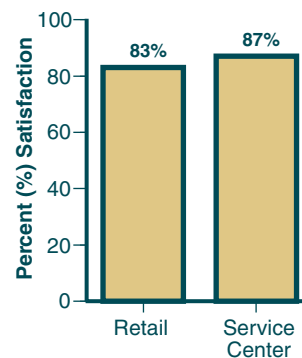
Are you satisfied? We ask...

The DNR's Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) calls for the agency to monitor customer satisfaction, to measure response times to customer questions and concerns, and to measure how well staff works with unhappy customers. The primary responsibility for these activities lies with Science Services. Over the past biennium, our sociologists surveyed customer satisfaction in two of the department's largest regulatory programs, air and wastewater permitting, and provided valuable information back to program management.

Facilities that receive air and wastewater permits experience intense interactions with DNR staff members during the process; they may experience problems, and often have questions related to the program covering their permits. "This environment provides an ideal situation in which to explore the issues raised by the SIP," explains Dr. Ed Nelson, the lead investigator.

In both studies, researchers surveyed Wisconsin facilities that recently received permits. Using standard mail survey procedures, booklet-style questionnaires were sent to the person in each facility that had primary responsibility for obtaining permits. In developing the questionnaires, researchers used information gathered from focus groups, interviews with applicants and program staff, and a review of survey instruments used by other states. This qualitative work, a necessary first step, provided a basis for understanding customer concerns and creating and designing the questionnaire. These methods produced survey response rates greater than 80%.

The surveys disclosed that both air and wastewater permit applicants are highly satisfied with the performance of the DNR staff who processed their applications. Respondents uniformly described staff members as courteous, knowledgeable, and helpful. Most stated that they received timely answers to their questions and that staff worked effectively with them to resolve problems. Respondents to the wastewater permit survey also indicated that while they appreciated the department's helpful staff, it is more important to them that staff members know wastewater permit rules.

Respondents to the air permit survey were less satisfied with the application process. Some applicants expressed concern that the process takes too long and costs too much. A drawn-out process can mean that both the agency and applicant lose key staff members who prepare or review the permit, forcing applicants to continually go back and review and relearn their permits. On the other hand, respondents to the wastewater permit survey were highly satisfied with the time allowed to complete the application, the quality and amount of DNR support, and the helpfulness and clarity of instructions. They were slightly less satisfied with the amount of information required to submit with their application.

One interesting finding related to how applicants apply for permits. In the wastewater permit survey, most municipal applicants said they preferred to receive and submit *paper* applications. Conversely, most industry applicants preferred to receive and submit *electronic* applications.

For the most part, permit applicants were satisfied with the final permit itself. Some, however, expressed concern over the costs associated with permit compliance, particularly requirements that they gather and report additional data. Recipients find themselves buying new equipment or paying staff to collect, record, and report additional data. They are not, however, convinced that stepped up record keeping will result in enhanced environmental protection.

These findings and others detailed in the final study reports can help program managers maintain and continually improve the level of service provided to regulated customers.